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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NICOSIA 000785

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CY](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: CYPRUS: STUDY POINTS FINGERS AT G/C HISTORY
EDUCATION

Classified By: Ambassador Frank Urbancic, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: A recently-published study by a respected Greek Cypriot academic that criticizes RoC middle school history instruction has strengthened the case of those G/Cs who are demanding a curriculum revision similar to that carried out in the Turkish Cypriot community five years ago. Should the reformers win out, the altered texts could help reduce nationalist sentiment prevalent today among Greek Cypriot youth. END SUMMARY.

Book Release Throws Gas on Fire

¶2. (SBU) Under the auspices of the Peace Research Institute-Oslo (PRIO), an NGO active on the island, University of Cyprus professor Yiannis Papadakis on September 25 presented his latest work, "History Education in Divided Cyprus: A Comparison of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot Schoolbooks." The timing of its release proved fortuitous. Just three weeks earlier, RoC Education Minister Andreas Demetriou had caused a stir in Nicosia with his instruction to teachers that the overarching aim for the academic year was to instill a spirit of bi-communal reconciliation and coexistence. Greek Cypriot nationalists like Archbishop Chrysostomos II had reacted predictably, claiming the revisions could threaten Cypriot Hellenism.

¶3. (U) Papadakis conducted research for his work in 2006, with the smell of the failed Annan Plan referenda still in the air and the communities on anything but friendly terms. Up for comparison were middle school texts then (and still) in use in the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, as well as the older T/C tomes, revised and greatly improved in 2004. He found the older works similar in structure and presentation, with history presented primarily as a Good versus Bad, Us versus Them equation. Ethno-centrism dominated, and the authors gave far greater emphasis to the histories of mother countries Greece and Turkey than to Cyprus itself. Inter-communal strife was the norm, while conversely, intra-communal conflict was papered over, even the left-right political divide and messy organized labor strife. There was little mention of the role of women in society.

History Began...When?

¶4. (U) According to Papadakis, G/C textbooks assert that Cypriot history commenced with the arrival of the Mycenaeans three thousand years ago. Cypriot Hellenism plays the role of protagonist throughout; those periods when the isle was under foreign occupation (a majority of the last 1500 years) receive pejorative reference as "-kratia" (-cracy), as in

Frank-kratia, Venetian-kratia, or Turk-kratia. The authors either lump Turkish Cypriots together with Turks -- a blood-thirsty, crude race, they allege -- or claim they were actually converted G/Cs, thus robbing them of a distinct ethnic identity. Papadakis noted there was little use of the terms "Greek Cypriot" and "Turkish Cypriot" in referring to the island residents, the authors preferring simply Greeks and Turks. Cyprus's official minorities, the Latins, Armenians, and Maronites, receive short shrift. And the inter-communal troubles that led to the de facto dissolution of the bi-communal RoC are barely mentioned at all.

15. (U) Turkish Cypriot schoolbooks in use from 1970 to 2004 read similarly, Papadakis explained, since hard-line nationalists and former TMT resistance figures had penned them. A dominant theme throughout was that "we" (T/Cs) cannot live with "them" (G/Cs). For geographical reasons, the island historically had identified far more with Anatolia, 40 miles distant, than with far-off Greece. History had begun with the arrival of the Ottomans in 1571, who brought progress and greater freedoms to an undeveloped backwater. The existing peoples of Cyprus -- "Rum" -- were not Greeks at all, but rather the results of mixing of the populations of the island's numerous overlords. Graphic photos of T/C victims of G/C-committed atrocities pepper the pages of the old history text, with G/Cs portrayed as connivers bent on domination and subjugation.

Political Change Brings Clearer Thinking

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16. (U) The rise to power of the left-wing, pro-solution CTP brought a successful effort to change the Turkish Cypriot history curriculum. "Despite certain omissions and mischaracterizations, the new books represented a root change in terms of content and methodology," Papadakis argued. In T/C teachers' hands since September 2004, the volumes describe both inter-communal cooperation and intra-communal strife. Civic nationalism, rather than ethnic nationalism, dominates, with the authors attempting to tie Cypriots to their land, not their community. Turkish Cypriots received a distinct identity separate from Turks, and Turkey was no longer the "mother country." Competing ethnic nationalisms and the British practice on Cyprus of divide-and-rule lay behind the 1960s troubles and eventual Turkish intervention, not just G/C determination to lord over T/Cs. Concluding, Papadakis claimed that, while the text still gave Greek Cypriots more blame than Turkish Cypriots for the island's current state, the work deserved praise and emulation south of the Green Line.

Comment

17. (C) The Embassy will report Septel the role of history education in shaping young minds, as well as the efforts of Greek Cypriot education reformers like Andreas Demetriou. They would seem to face an uphill struggle, not only from nationalists such as the Archbishop and his allies in the DIKO, EDEK, and EUROKO parties, but also from Cyprus's potent teachers unions, some of which are both change-resistant and ideologically aligned with the aforementioned political forces. Time is not necessarily on the side of reunification; anecdotal evidence shows that G/Cs under 30, 90 percent of whom voted against the Annan Plan, are among the island's hardest-liners.
Urbancic